



Transatlantic gender trafficking and imperial anxiety in nineteenth-century Spanish fiction: *trata de blancas* (1889) and *carne importada* (1891)

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Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to reassess the ideological imprint of imperialism in late-nineteenth-century Spanish fiction through the analysis of two noncanonical novels: Eugenio Antonio Flores's *Trata de blancas* (1889) and Eduardo López Bago's *Carne importada* (1891). Both novels feature female protagonists who become entangled in networks of international sex trafficking in their respective migrations to Cuba and Argentina. Traditionally ascribed to Spanish "radical naturalist" fiction or simply dismissed as inconsequential instances of *bordello* literature, these texts are interpreted in this paper from the perspective of postcolonial criticism in order to reveal both the political significance of their transatlantic setting and the symbolic meaning that they assign to so-called white slavery and the figure of the prostitute. Ultimately, these novels will be read as symptoms of a collective anxiety resulting from the downfall of the Spanish Empire on the verge of its collapse in 1894. Hispanic Review is the property of University of Pennsylvania Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full abstract.*

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An important addition to the anti-microbial activity is a proven positive effect of macrolides on mechanisms to ensure the optimization of immunological reactivity [46,49]. This fact was the basis of their use not only in the treatment of respiratory infections in immunocompromised patient groups, but also in urogenital chlamydiosis and mycoplasmosis.

The uniqueness of macrolides is that their therapeutic efficacy is determined not only by the direct antibacterial activity, but also the influence on the system of non-specific anti-infection protection. Formulations optimize the local and systemic inflammatory reaction of the organism mediated by cytokines [27]. Possible clinical importance is the interaction with phagocytes antibiotics, resulting in the reduced activity of the free radical oxidation and isolation of proinflammatory cytokines activated chemotaxis, phagocytosis, and killing of. Furthermore, macrolides have membrane stabilizing activity [31, 42].

As noted, a complex macrolide-phagocyte is interesting because it is the basis of the antibiotic transport system in the inflammatory focus. In a study in human volunteers treated with azithromycin at 500 mg for 3 days, C_{max} in PMNL was 114 mg / L (after 12 hours after the last dose), monocytes - 34 mg / l (after 6 hours). After 12 days the concentration of azithromycin in PMNL remained high - 53 mg / l, while the content of the

drug in the monocytes was decreased to 1 mg / L [43].

Generated high tissue concentrations that greatly exceed IPC sensitive microorganisms determine pharmacodynamic advantages macrolides [2]. Furthermore, accumulation of macrolides in the lysosomes of phagocytic cells forms at an effective merging of lysosomes and phagosomes therapeutic concentration in the cytoplasm and phagolysosomes - habitat *Chlamydia* spp, *Mycoplasma* spp.. and other microorganisms, which does not allow the latter to inhibit fagolizosomalnuyu function [26,36].

Azithromycin accumulates intracellularly in the lysosomes phospholipid layer, located between the fatty acid chains of the phospholipids and slowly diffuses into environment - this explains unique inherent only to him pharmacokinetics, allowing to assign it single or short course [35].

Some macrolides, such as azithromycin and josamycin, neutrophils accumulate in the lead to the stimulation of "oxidative explosion," strengthening of phagocytosis and killing [17,18]. A distinctive feature of azithromycin, is the unique ability after readjustment infection stop already unnecessary free radical reaction, and the synthesis and secretion of proinflammatory cytokines - interleukins (IL - 1, 6, 8), tumor necrosis factor - alpha, simultaneously amplifying selection inflammatory mediators (IL - 2 , 4, 10) [46,48]. Unnecessary immune "attack" stopped due to apoptosis of neutrophils [29].

Also important clinical aspect of the use of macrolides in urogenital infections. If we take chlamydioses, the obtained number of clinical evidence of high efficiency macrolides treatment of patients with laboratory confirmed *Chlamydia trachomatis* strains resistant to these drugs [13]. On the other hand, the current practice of treating patients with infections urogenitalnymi provides both combination therapy with antibiotics and destination immunotropic pathogenic and anti-inflammatory complex. The reason for this co-morbidity patients and the presence of mixed infections. If we turn to our experience, it is still in the years 2004-2006 were examined 658 patients with symptoms of infectious diseases of the urogenital tract. Diagnosis included the selection of all possible pathogens including Gram-positive, Gram negative microorganisms and *Chlamydia* (immunofluorescence method, PCR), and the *Trichomonas mycoplasmas*. Positive bacteriological result detected in 612 (93%) patients. Allocated 769 strains of microorganisms. In 308 (46.8%) patients allocated mycoplasma, chlamydia and trichomonas. One in five of these patients had association "atypical" organisms [2].

While debates on global integration frequently involve discussion of nations, cultures, factories and households, it is possible to reframe these questions so that they focus more on individuals. Global integration is not merely participation in the world eco-

nomie system—the act of sewing or assembling goods—instead, it can be thought of as the state of being globalized, both in terms of work-force participation and cognitive sensemaking, the process by which workers in globally-integrated workspaces make sense of their roles within them. Furthermore, integration can be evaluated in terms of the quality of global economic information workers possess, the way they acquire it, and how this information is used. By considering globalization in such a light, we establish not just the mere "fact" of integration, but also the "degree" of integration that exists in a locality and the variety of responses to it.

Thus, taking global integration to be rooted both in experience and cognition, this paper examines how garment workers in the globally-integrated Kenyan apparel industry make sense of their lives and their work. I have selected Kenya's 38,000 garment workers as the focus of my study because of the complex transnational network they are enmeshed in via their work. Since the passage of the U.S African Growth and Opportunity Act in 2000 (AGOA), Kenya has metamorphosed from a fledgling producer of domestic apparels to the third largest garment exporter in Sub Saharan Africa. \$266 million dollars of Kenyan apparel were shipped to the United States in 2005, constituting 59% of Kenya's exports for the year (EPZA 2005). By outperforming other export industries, apparel manufacture in

Kenya has become a preeminent source of regional and global economic integration.

Integration into the global economy has also made the Kenyan apparel industry extremely volatile.

Since the World Trade Organization's apparel quota regime expired on January 1st, 2005, American buyers who source in Kenya have begun patronizing low cost producers in South and East Asia. Thus far, the consolidation of garment manufacture to Asia has led to the closing of seven garment factories in Kenya. However, the reconfiguration of the garment industry has the potential to cause even more damage over time. The expiration of MFA quota provisions is often compared to the tsunami of 2004, because it will potentially deprive more than half a million workers in the "global periphery" of their basic livelihoods (Barboza 2005).

Considering the complex transnational linkages that garment manufacture has created in Kenya, as well as the global economic processes that now appear to be threatening its existence, this project investigates what economic integration means from the vantage point of workers. Specifically, I seek to understand how Kenyan apparel workers understand and interpret their position in global production systems, what factors influence their processes of sensemaking, and how this knowledge gets accrued, transferred and assimilated by workers inside and outside the factory setting.

Here, sensemaking refers to the process of "constructing, filtering, framing and creating facticity"—or, developing new understandings of self, environment and society based on experience and learning (Turner 1987, Weick 1995: 14).

By exploring the experiences of Kenyan apparel workers, my inquiry contributes to an important body of research concerning global factory work. Since the rise of export processing zones in the late 1970's, many scholars have written on globalized factories as they relate to development, female wage work, workers rights and labor organizing. Through discussion of workplace harassment, the feminization of poverty and changing modes of household reproduction, research on global factories has enlivened debates on globalization and expanded notions of development to include both economic and social indices (Zohir and Paul-Majumder 1994, Dani 1997, Sharmin Absar 2001, Ward et al. 2004, Ross 1997, Rothstein and Blim 1992, Collins 2003). Despite its thorough treatment of women, labor and globalization, the literature on global factories does not explore the processes of sensemaking which take place among overseas workers. Most scholarship on global factories discusses the macro-processes of manufacture without exploring the micro-processes inherent within: particularly, the ways that workers produce their self-concepts and make sense of their embeddedness in volatile, exploitative

and globally-integrated production processes. This is true even of ethnographic work on the garment and apparel industry. Generally, the majority of anthropological studies on garment work limit their discussion of these subjects to the topics of social reproduction, household production and labor insurgency (Fernandez Kelly 1983, Igelsias Pierto 1985, Carvey 1998).

The best treatment of worker subjectivities and sensemaking in globalized workplaces can be found in the anthropological writings of Chung Yuan Kay (1994), Margaret Tally (2003) and Pun Ngai (2005), which focus on the topic of export manufacture in East Asia. Chung Yuan Kay's "Conflict and Compliance: The Workplace Politics of a Disk-Drive Factory in Singapore" expands the frame of traditional factory research by examining the discourses on work that exist among Singaporean factory workers. Here, the author's analysis centers on worker's "personal stores of knowledge" and their everyday acts of resistance. She concludes that women workers resist and contest managerial control through "verbal subterfuge," shop floor collusion, and other [subtle] acts of insubordination (Kay 1994: 217). The sum of these parts is factory consciousness, which Kay characterizes as redrawing of "the limits of control at the point of production," and denying management some "power to be" (Kay 1994: 223).

Pun Ngai's (2005) *Made In China* also theorizes about the female "worker-subject." Tracking female migrant workers on the shop floor, in factory dormitories, and in the center city as they shop for goods, Ngai concludes that women's experiences are multi-sited and multilayered, consisting of both "domination and resistance, dream and desire and hope and anxiety" (Ngai 2005: 163). Her analysis points out that workers experience their employment in globally integrated companies in subjective and oftentimes contradictory terms. Within the lives of the workers that Ngai follows, we see an interwoven tapestry of frustration and fulfillment that is constantly battled with and negotiated.

Last within this group, Margaret Tally's "The Illness of Global Capitalism," explores the way in which frustration is embodied among female customer service workers. Premising her study on the fact that "workers bodies have not been actively theorized in studies of labor," Tally observes that female workers' bodies are commodities in production processes as well as vessels for instrumental and physical pain (Tally 2003: 4). Consequently, although Tally's work does not perform discourses analysis per se, it examines a subject that my research is deeply invested in: namely, the way that work influences women's senses of self, their "persons" and their daily lives.

Yet, while these authors make significant contributions to our under-

standing of worker subjectivities, they overlook a topic that is central to this study—namely, the topic of how workers acquire global economic information and how they incorporate it into their lives as workers. Within the field of research pertaining to globally-integrated industries, the only literature that shares my interest in this topic is research on transnational advocacy networks, or TANs (Featherstone

2002, Feldman 1997, Streeten 1997, Keck and Sikkink 1998, 2001). In “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics,” anthropologists Keck and Sikkink (1998) develop a political process model that describes the way that knowledge is created and transferred between actors in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Here, the authors conclude that information is a resource that players in the South give activists in the North so that they can raise awareness about their struggles and further their advocacy initiatives (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Though insightful, the limitation of this Japan analysis is that it revolves around a circumscribed set of participants—namely, globally integrated workers and foreign activists. Although there is a history of transnational activism in Kenyan EPZs, I cannot limit my analysis to this class of interactions alone, nor can I presume that information is important to workers solely because of its potential as an advocacy tool (Keck and Sikkink

1998). Given Keck and Sikkink’s limiting definitions, my research expands the conceptual frame of TAN research by examining the role of global economic information in workers’ own processes of sensemaking, and by looking at all of the points where social networks, knowledge, consciousness and experience intersect—not just the points which involve Northern activists.

Beyond social movement network theory, this paper also benefits from research in organizational and social psychology. In *Gender Symbolism and Organizational Cultures*, Gherardi (1995) argues that workers’ identities and discourses on employment are mediated by their position in gender binaries and social hierarchies. Similarly, Stanley Harris (1994) asserts that workers make sense of their jobs through “schemata,” or subjective knowledge systems based on past experience (Harris 1994: 308). Harris identifies three types of schemata that are relevant to workers’ self conceptions: self-in-organization schema, “person-in-organization schema, and “organizational schema (Harris 1994: 318). These schemata are both reflexive and subjective: workers’ impressions are shaped by the way they deconstruct the organizational world around them.

Since my investigation centers on one case study, I will not make broad claims regarding how workers in the Southern Hemisphere perceive global production and economic globaliza-

tion. Nevertheless, my project will make noteworthy contributions to sociological theory and research. I hope to illuminate topics that have not been fully explored in the literature. In addition, my research will enrich existing studies on the Sub Saharan apparel industry by introducing qualitative analysis and bringing research on Kenyan garment industry up to date with the post-MFA period (Gibbon 2003, 2004, 2005; Gibbs 2005, McCormick 2001, McCormick, Kinyanjui and Ongile 1997).

Finally, I anticipate that my project will enhance global factory research by broadening its focus to include, rather than exclude, analysis of men's experiences. Contrary to traditional suppositions, men are not absent from garment firms, nor are they managers or solely supervisors; instead, they range in scope from machine operators and pressmen to washers and packers, who work in departments alongside women. In making sense of workers' embeddedness in global production networks, it is important to examine workers of both genders and to consider their lives on the shop floor as well as outside the firm. Although this approach breaks from the precedent of the literature, it allows me to analyze the ways that gender and social location affect workers' experience of global integration.

The rise of garment manufacture in Kenya can be traced to the passage of the U.S. Trade and Development Act of 2000, better known as the

Japan Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Before the advent of AGOA, only two dozen EPZ firms were operational in Kenya and apparel was manufactured solely for domestic consumption. Today, however, Kenya has 74 EPZ firms – with more than half working in the area of apparels (EPZA 2005). Garment manufacturers represent the largest cluster of EPZ firms in Kenya, as well as the largest source of AGOAs exports. 77% of Kenya's AGOA exports fall under the heading of garments and apparel (AGOA.info 2006).

Thanks to AGOA's provisions concerning duty-free and quota-free apparel export privileges for beneficiary countries, apparel manufacture has become a critical industry in Kenya and one of the nation's largest employers. EPZ garment firms employ upwards of 1,200 workers each and are some of the largest formal employers of women in the country. Of the 37,723 Kenyans that work in EPZs in Nairobi, Mombasa and Athi River, an estimated 80 percent are female garment workers (EPZA 2005). Export processing zones are also a preeminent source of foreign investment in Kenya, albeit portfolio investment. The primary buyers of Kenyan apparel are American retailers like Wal-Mart, Target, Sears and Match point, among which Wal-Mart is the largest customer. In addition, a wide range of brand marketers source their garments from Kenya. These include Jordache, U.S. Polo, Joe Boxer and

Dickies (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2003b).

Within the literature on global production networks, Kenya's apparel industry can be classified as a buyer-driven commodity chain (Gereffi 1994). This term denotes information regarding both industry structure and industry control. In regards to structure, the Kenyan garment industry is a buyer driven commodity chain because it is "highly competitive and globally decentralized factory system with low entry barriers" (Gereffi 1994, Gereffi 2001: 3). Meanwhile, in terms of industry control, the Kenyan garment industry is buyer-driven because retailers, fashion designers and branded manufacturers are the lead agents of production.

For theorists like Gereffi (1994), economic development and industrial upgrading occur on buyer-driven commodity chains when suppliers wrest control from their buyers and assume larger and more diversified roles in production—which is to say, greater levels of horizontal integration. This paradigm aptly describes the range of conflict that actors in the Kenyan apparel industry have faced since the growth of the industry in 2000. For officials at the Kenyan Export Processing Zone Authority, conflict has revolved around the struggle to realize national development goals vis a vis an industry known for portfolio investment, labor-exploitation, and destabilizing competition.

Meanwhile, among workers, conflict has consisted of the struggle for sustenance vis a vis employment that lacks regularity and stability, both in terms of work hours and future prospects. Finally, among factory owners, the struggle has been to adapt to global economic pressures and buyer demands whilst maintaining a labor regime and a regulatory environment that is designed to ensure profit. Thus, the struggle for development (and alternately profit) vis a vis Kenya's labor-intensive garment industry has been a struggle for value chain governance amongst various actors. Nonetheless, the struggle for export-led development in Kenya has also been a struggle for sustainability at the industry level. As an AGOA beneficiary, Kenya faces competition from African countries that also benefit from U.S. trade concessions: namely Lesotho, Swaziland, Madagascar, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda and Mauritius (AGOA info 2006).³ As a recent entrant into export apparel industry, however, Kenya also competes with better-established garment manufacturers in East Asia, South Asia and Latin America. Competition with these countries has been particularly stiff in wake of the WTO's recent deregulation of the apparel market. When compared to Kenya, buyers to the Chinese market benefit from the comparative value of Chinese labor, the convenience of locally-produced threads and textiles, and the availability of full package manufacturers, or

garment firms that source their own raw materials and assist their buyers on issues related to fashion design (Bair and Gereffi 2003).

Unlike its competitors in China, full package garment manufacture and raw material production do not occur in Kenya. Instead, manufacturers in the Kenyan industry impor

t their thread, yarn and textiles from East Asia and sew them locally. Not only does this arrangement prevent capital from accruing locally, it jeopardizes manufacturers because it relies on Kenya's continued recognition as a Less Developed Country under AGOA. Under the LDC Beneficiary Clause, Kenya is exempt from stipulations that require AGOA garments to be made from African or American textile. When the LDC Beneficiary Program expires in September 2007, Kenyan manufacturers will be forced to source costly local fabrics, a shift which analysts predict will be the death knell of the industry (Kathuri 2005).

The precariousness of investment in the Kenyan garment industry is a constant source of anxiety for policymakers, and as a result, policies on apparel work are constantly being reformulated by the government. In 2004 and 2005 the Value Added Tax was briefly levied in 2004 in order to generate government revenue, but after a flurry of threats, the VAT on textile imports was dropped (Akumu 2004). Then, in the aftermath of the failed tax levy, parliamentarians fielded proposals to

expand the EPZ sector at large and extend the ten year tax holidays for EPZ investors by another five years -- a move that would absolve companies of their duty to pay corporate tax and VAT for the entire duration of AGOA (Anyanzwa 2004). Officials at the Kenyan Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA), Kenyan Ministry of Planning and Development and Kenyan Association of Manufacturers have also begun planning an initiative that would create an indigenous cotton industry (Ndurya 2006). This project responds to global commodity chain theory concerning the importance of horizontal integration to development (Gereffi 1994).

Outside the sphere of macroeconomic policy, however, the Kenyan government takes a largely *laissez-faire* approach to managing the export sector. Kenya's export apparel industry is primarily foreign-owned and heavily privatized. Of the 41 Export Processing Zones that exist in Kenya, 14% are Kenyan owned, 28% are jointly owned, and 58% are owned exclusively by foreigners (U.S. Department of State 2006). Similarly, only one EPZ in Kenya—the Athi River EPZ in AthiRiver, Kenya—is publicly managed (U.S. Department of State 2006).

Private investment, however, is just one facet of Kenya's institutionalized *laissez faire* philosophy. The government agencies that oversee export manufacture in Kenya also take a *laissez faire* approach to labor regulation. The best evidence of this disposi-

tion can be found in the government's handling of a 2003 EPZ strike that saw garment country-wide workers walk off their jobs and protest conditions (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2003a.). Although stakeholders organized forums between workers and employers within the first weeks of the strike, negotiations broke down following pressure from factory owners (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2003a). Rather than address worker's grievances, the Minister of Labor opted to declare their work stoppage illegal and give factory managers permission to dismiss them all (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2003b).

The short term consequences of this authorization were disastrous. On February 3, 2003, more than 9,200 EPZ workers were dismissed from their jobs abruptly and without receipt of their terminal benefits (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2003b). Retrenched workers were forced to reapply for their jobs while labor organizers were blacklisted from EPZ work entirely. The government also implemented a detrimental salary plan that changed workers' status from casual to permanent but reduced real wages considerably (Wasonga 2006). Consequently, the only real achievement of the 2003 strike was winning union recognition, and even the reach of this victory was limited due to concerns among investors that unions would increase their costs prohibitively.⁵ In the end, the only EPZ that came to have Unions

was the publicly managed export processing zone in Athi River.

The failure of the labor movement was not due to a lack of awareness on the part of the government, however. The problems of low wage, forced and unpaid overtime, sexual harassment, verbal harassment, unpaid maternity leave and occupational hazards that are endemic to the Kenyan garment industry are well known by Ministers and government officials. While conducting interviews at the EPZA Headquarters in Athi River, an official told me: "If only wages could be higher... things are really tough for workers." Thus, the government's suppression of the EPZ workers movement demonstrates the extent to which "investors' rights" are valued over workers' rights.

Despite the government's stony disposition towards workers, export processing zones have been a target of advocacy for several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kenya. Throughout the strike of 2003, a non-governmental organization called the Kenya Human Rights Commission lobbied alongside workers for improved working conditions. These efforts garnered the solidarity of international labor organizations like the Clean Clothes Campaign. The CCC issued an urgent appeal on its website urging its supporters to write letters to Wal-Mart, Target, and the Kenyan Ministry of Labour (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2003a). Representatives from the Clean Clothes Cam-

paign also traveled to Kenya in April 2003 to assess EPZs conditions for themselves.

In the years following the unsuccessful strike in the EPZs, the Kenya Human Rights Commission has involved EPZ workers in rallies concerning workers rights in the sectors of garments, agriculture, and horticulture, invited workers to one-day seminars on workers rights, and published literature on EPZ conditions using grants from the Clean Clothes Campaign and Oxfam (Ouma 2005). In addition, the Tailors and Textiles Workers Union continues to try and register EPZ workers outside of Athi River, albeit unsuccessfully and rather half heartedly (Wasonga 2006).

The findings of this project are based on three months of qualitative fieldwork in Kenya. Between June and August 2005, I completed 50 formal, in-depth interviews with garment workers using the snowball sampling method.⁶ My respondent pool was diverse in terms of place of work, job title, current employment status, length of time on the job, prior work history, educational background and marital status. My respondent pool was also unique due to its sex makeup. While women are traditionally the subjects of research on apparels, my project consciously broke from this mold. I interviewed a roughly proportional group of female and male workers, under the premise that members of both sexes are intrinsic to the garment production process in Kenya, and that both hold

valuable perspectives and subjectivities.

All of my interviews with workers were 60 minutes to 2 hours in duration. Interviews were conducted in discreet cafes at a distance from EPZ firms or in workers' actual homes. Since Kiswahili and English are both national languages in Kenya, most of my interviews took place comfortably in English. On several occasions, however, interviews were done in Kiswahili with help from a bilingual translator.

Interviews generally began with discussion of the tasks that workers perform on the job, the dynamics of employer - employee relations, and workers' perspectives on working conditions and pay. Here, I was particularly interested in resolving how low-level employees interact with managers, and whether this class of interactions is conducive to information-transfers. Workers were also asked to give their perspectives on the Kenyan labor movement and relay any direct experiences that they have had with human rights activism or labor organizing. This helped me get a sense of some of the alternative information networks that workers are enmeshed in.

After establishing this baseline profile, workers were also asked about their knowledge of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the end markets for their goods, the retail value of the goods they produce, export-oriented growth models, the geographical loca-

tion of other EPZs and other garment industries, and their level of familiarity with terms such as “sweatshops,” “globalization” and “multinational corporations.” These questions were designed to glean the type of socioeconomic information workers possess about the global garment industry and the importance of this information to their own self-conceptions.

My final subset of interview questions dealt with the ways in which workers get economic information. Here, I asked my interviewees to describe their levels of contact with local labor activists, unions, local NGOs and international workers rights organizations, and the types of information they gain from them. I also asked workers about their level of viewership of local and international newspapers, television programs (emphasis on TV news), and radio. Finally, I asked workers to describe the primary places they obtain information about trade, human rights and the global apparel industry – giving names of places and people where possible.

In addition to interviewing workers, I spent eight hours a week conducting ethnographic participant/observer research in select field sites. A considerable amount of these observations occurred during meetings of the EPZ Workers Association, a grassroots organization led by five former garment workers. I also reported to actual Export Processing Zones each day, interviewing laid-off

workers in the mornings and afternoons and interacting with presently employed workers during their lunch hours. Finally, I spent a significant amount of time in the slum communities where workers lived, visiting members of the Export Processing Zone Association in their homes and occasionally conducting interviews. Consequently, although my fieldwork was less extensive than my interview research, it offered me insights on lives of workers outside the factory setting.

While my respondents had work experience in a variety of EPZ factories (including factories in Mombasa), the majority of workers I spoke to hailed from a cluster of garment firms in Nairobi and Athi River. Given their centrality to the commentary that follows, these workplaces are described below. Included is information concerning factory location, factory ownership, basic wage rates for permanent workers, factory policies towards Unions, and its reputation among workers in my sample.

My research on Kenyan EPZs indicates that garment workers build their perceptions of EPZ work and global garment manufacture through their positions in production and shop floor hierarchies, their interactions with other EPZ workers within gendered social networks, and their viewership of newsmedia both in the workplace and in the home. As one might expect, these processes of sensemaking are not circumscribed

into absolute binaries such as “at home” and “at work.” For instance, sensemaking on gendered social networks occurs both inside and outside the factory and involves a combination of current garments workers, former workers, and family members and friends.

My study also reveals that the information which flows down these channels is rich and varied. Workers learn the names of apparel buyers, the cost of finished garments, the geographic reach of apparel manufacture, the volatility of global production chains and trends in global competition. In addition, workers learn about working conditions in other Kenyan factories, forms of resistance that are available to workers, and prospects for the industry at large. Thus, workers’ perceptions of self and work are bifurcated into the categories “global” and “local.”

As the source of workers’ integration into the global economy, EPZ factory floors play host to an intricate web of production relationships and interactions and are preeminent sites of knowledge acquisition among garment workers. While working laboring on the shop floor, workers learn about the end consumer markets for their goods, the geographical reach of EPZ garment manufacture, and the working conditions facing workers in other countries. Given the patterns in my data, this learning on the part of workers is a function of their company’s organizational structure, its corpo-

rate ideology, managerial style, and the ethnicities of its staff persons.

Managerial style has a large impact on learning among workers because supervisors frequently address workers and reprimand them over matters relating to target, production quality, and compulsory overtime. Here, the ethnicity of supervisors also plays a part in worker learning. Most of the upper level management working in Kenyan garment firms migrated to Kenya from Asian countries with burgeoning garment industries of their own. As a result, many expatriate supervisors juxtapose Kenyan workers with garment workers from East Asia when chastising Kenyans about the shortcomings in their production. These discourses convey a great deal of information to Kenyan workers regarding the geographic reach of EPZ garment manufacture, and workers often internalize the information they acquire through these interactions.

For instance, when I asked Alice from Right Choice where EPZs were located outside of Kenya, she immediately responded: “Sri Lanka. Supervisors always say that Sri Lankans, they’re always here on the job, that when he comes to work, he is supposed to work even eight hours, he is sure of what he’s doing, and in those hours he has already reached his target.”

I observed another case of sensemaking-through-reprimand while talking to a Right Choice Press-

man named George. When asked about garment manufacture outside of Kenya, George told me: "Supervisors always tell us that Kenya is being paid a lot of money compared to China, Bangladesh, and other African countries. In Africa, we are the highest paid." Thus, workers at Right Choice acquire much of their knowledge about global garment manufacture while being reprimanded for their 'poor' work-ethic, given their 'high' compensation.

Variants of this phenomenon take place at other factories as well. At Quality-Tex, a machinist named Jennifer told me that she learned about garment manufacture in Bangladesh because her factory was run by Bangladeshis who compared Kenyan workers to those from their home country.⁸ Similarly at Pride of Kenya, a male machinist told me he knew about garment manufacture in China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh because of encounters with managers from those countries. At Pyramid, a female checker also told me she had heard about Bangladeshi EPZs through a line master who confided he had been a machinist in Bangladesh and that there were constantly problems with the power supply.

Although reprimand and managerial discourse are rich sources of global economic information for workers, they are better at conveying some types of information than others. Managerial reprimand always expands workers' sense of the geography of

EPZ manufacture – i.e. garment manufacture in Madagascar, China, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Uganda. However, more detailed description of foreign industries are often contested. As a worker at Sri Lanka Star informed me:

"I have heard stories that Sri Lanka Star has another EPZ in Sri Lanka, but I don't know more about that. What I know is that they really say their companies in Sri Lanka are doing really well. But me, using my common sense and just seeing the way that they are talking, you can imagine! Those people are coming here, and they are trying to sew here, when they can sew in their own country. That means just means they are benefiting [...]. So for me, that is just talk."

Despite workers' skepticism towards narratives that boast of prosperous overseas garment production, these discourses do not distort the realities of global apparel manufacture as much as they disclose truths about garment manufacture under the WTO Multifiber Agreement. Much of the decentralization that exists in the apparel industry is a function of the quotas on apparel export that the WTO enforced prior to January 1, 2005. Under the quota system, garment industry has not been prefaced on perfect competition. Instead, it has been an industry organized around comparative advantage in terms of labor costs and market access.

The fact that these narratives are factual does not mean they are innocu-

ous speech acts, however. To the contrary, narratives on global garment manufacture are often used to silence workers who have job-related grievances – be it concerns about late payment or forced overtime. Narratives on global garment manufacture also allow factory managers to pass their anxieties and insecurities about global integration down to their workers. This mechanism is evident in managerial assertions that garment firms will leave Kenya due to VAT levies and increased competition with China. Given the testimonies of the workers I spoke to, comments like these pervade the shop floor throughout the year, but particularly when there are urgent shipments and lulls in production.

Sensemaking through reprimand and casual interaction is not the only form of shop-floor sensemaking that occurs at Kenyan garment factories. Several garment firms in Kenya also have institutional frameworks for disseminating global economic information between management and workers. At Sri Lankan Star, the only Thika Road EPZ with such a system, this infrastructure assumes two forms. First, the management of Sri Lankan Star maintains a bulletin board with current news articles on garment manufacture in Kenya, China, Bangladesh and elsewhere. As a machinist named Catherine told me, information pertaining to garments in China is routinely posted in the company bulletin board.

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